THIRD LECTURE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

By the Rev. Mr. Drake.

Again we remind our readers that it is through the medium of the lectures and the writings of the various zealous labourers for the advancement of architecture that we hope most effectually to accomplish the great object we have in view. As to the religious opinions of each we stand in this journal independent—that is to say, we are not their advocates. Our province is in the glorious territory of art, and we welcome every auxiliary, whether he burn with the zeal of religion—the highest—or the inferior grade of impulses; whether devotion to God, or the equally necessary, yet subsidiary, duty of the love of his neighbour animate him. In another part of our paper we have enlarged on this view of the subject, and to that we beg to refer. We now proceed to give a report of the lecture before us; it is necessarily much abridged, though still of considerable length, and we fear that the mutilations we have been compelled to make may be thought to have impaired it.

"The lamentable ignorance which even now exists on the subject of church architecture and church-arrangement renders it probable that many of my hearers, if they were to commence an attentive examination of any of our old churches, would find many objects present themselves, the use and meaning of which would be totally unintelligible. The natural good taste of some would, doubtless, enable them to appreciate the harmonious adaptation of such detached portions to the combined effect, even when there was no apprehension or understanding of their immediate purpose. I shall in this lecture give a brief account of the details which present themselves internally and externally to the students of ancient models. We shall find much of deep symbolism, much that has reference to customs long since lost. Some things we shall find which need but to be pointed out to excite the desire for their restoration. It will be remembered then, that, in the first instance, we propose to speak of things as they were, and that we are not to be understood as expressing any opinion on the practicability or propriety of reviving all or any of the observances to which the details about to be spoken of refer; contenting ourselves with a general approbation of the principle of symbolical representation, as at once sanctioned by the authority of antiquity and appropriate to the objects had in view, we must defer to the latter part of our lecture our views on church arrangement and church adornment, such as we believe to be consistent with the forms and practices of our church services.

"At the entrance to the church-yard to many of our smaller churches, especially in and on the borders of Wales, but also not unfrequently in England, we find a small covered porch of rude construction; it consists of two simple walls of stone or wood, sometimes with a tiled, sometimes with a thatched roof: this is the Lych-gate, or corpse-gate, so called from the Anglo-Saxon *leich*, a dead body. This gate was (or rather, I should say is; for in one instance (Llandyo near Tintern) it is still used) only opened to admit the departed to their last resting-place in the hallowed precincts of the sanctuary; here the coffin is set down for a few minutes before burial.

"In or near the church-yard, we shall frequently find the remains of a cross of stone, which, previous to the rebellion, was always placed there—there are many beautiful models in the south-west counties—some of which are elaborately carved, and filled with canopied niches. They were generally cast down by the iconoclastic zeal of the Puritans, though some were probably purposely hidden, to save them from the hand of the spoilers, as they are occasionally dug up. It would be well if the cross still stood within the church-yard's hallowed round; raised on a spot so peculiarly its own, it could not but be considered appropriate; and it may be feared that there are many who go up to the house of prayer, whose thoughts are engrossed by subjects which would be well exchanged for those which such '*a dearer remembrance of our dying Lord*' would not unfrequently suggest.

"The yew tree may also be regarded as part of the church-yard furniture; in some parts of England it is never wanting. At Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas, its boughs are used to ornament the interior. The preference given to this tree is thus stated: 'This yew tree, as I imagine, may be accounted a fit emblem of a Christian. You see it hath but little outside rinde or barke, only a small film, to teach us not to make a fair outside and formality of our religion to the world. Then it is a very fine hardy timber, to shew the soundness and sincerity of a Christian. It hath many branches large and fair, to remember us to be plentiful in good works. It is always green and prospering, to declare unto us that a Christian should always thrive and grow in grace. Yea, green in winter and the hardest weather, to shew that a Christian is best in affliction: yea, then it hath berries on it, to teach us as then we are the best Christians, so then and always to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. It is a long-living and lasting tree, to be unto us a type of immortality and lasting life. Thus you see a man may read a lecture from a yew tree.'

"Whether the church-yard graves were usually marked or not, it is not easy to say; the present incongruous and grotesque head-stones, and frequently absurd inscriptions, will be spoken of under the general head of monumental records.

"So much for the church-yard, and before we enter the church we may notice one or two of its minor exterior points. Over the east end of the nave a small erection is frequently found, to contain one or more bells; this is the Sancte-bell-cot; it contained the little bell, rung to give notice that the *Sanctus*, *sanctus*, *sanctus Dominus*, *Deus Sabaoth*, in the celebration of the mass had commenced, and to warn the people of the approaching elevation of the Host: the custom of ringing a bell on the commencement of the Eucharist is still retained at St. John's College, Cambridge. The gable end of the nave and chancel frequently bore a cross; that of Lowth Church is by far the most striking of any I have seen; the crown of thorns is hung upon the cross, and the carving is as sharp as the day it was executed.

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"Some persons have objected to the use of the cross in church decoration, and this upon the old plea that it has been abused. For myself, I cannot imagine a more beautiful ornament, nor a more appropriate finish to the summit of the gable of a Christian church than the symbol of faith to which it is dedicated; what have *urns, and balls, and balustrades, and such like enormities* to do in such a place?

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"On entering the church, either by the north or south porch, or at the west end, we frequently find beneath a niche, and projecting from the wall, a stone basin. This is the Benatûre, or holy-water stoup, into which, in ancient times, each worshipper dipped his finger and crossed himself. The custom fell into disuse at the Reformation, and most of the stoups were mutilated or destroyed; it was far from a universal appendage to a church, as the stoup was frequently a moveable vessel of metal.

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"Having passed the stoup, the first thing which should meet the eye is the font, because being at once the symbol and instrument of baptism, it represents the entrance into the spiritual temple, the Church of Christ. As far as we can observe, this arrangement was never departed from in ancient churches, and it is one the wilful neglect of which is deserving the most unqualified condemnation. The treatment of many of our most beautiful fonts and the little regard paid to this most important feature in the arrangement of a church, is one of the most lamentable signs of itching ears rather than devout hearts, which postpone alike the teaching of the church and the word of God, to the gratification of its own taste for preaching. The sacrament of baptism, that solemn ordinance of our blessed Lord, is raised by Scripture to a place of peculiar reverence in the mind of the Christian, as the instrument whereby he is engrafted into the Christian Church, and our church has wisely ordained that this sacrament shall be duly received by the infant candidates for her privileges and love, in sight and hearing of the congregation, that they may be profitably reminded of the solemn vow and promise and profession which they have made to God. For this purpose the font in large churches was elevated on one or more steps; while in small ones this was unnecessary; because in those days there were none of those dens of spiritual pride and exclusiveness called pews, to overtop and to hide by their superior height the very layer of regeneration. If we were not checked in our scourge of the ludicrous by a feeling of the solemn importance of the subject, we might laugh heartily at some of the many instances in which symbolical propriety has been violated in the position, and decent reverence forgotten, in the treatment of fonts. Our own observations will supply some powerful examples. What, for instance, can be more absurd than to place two fonts in one church, as though our Lord had appointed not one baptism, but two? And yet two fonts are placed to match each other in the otherwise well-appointed church at Balsall Temple. The chancel, which, in the symbolic language of church architecture, represents, as the place set apart for the celebration of the eucharist, the church in heaven, is a singularly inappropriate, but very favourite locality for the font in these days. There we find it in the little church of Ashow, with a marble slab and a blue basin stuck upon the ancient Norman work, which is also disfigured with paint. There, too, we find it at Stoneleigh Church, while there is abundance of room by the church door; and the same is the case at Knowle, where the taste which has preserved and renovated the rood-screen has unhappily not yet reached the font, nor prevented its cover from being painted and sanded to look like stone. I heard a traditionary rumour when at Knowle, that this font-cover was designed by Pugin. If so, his usual good taste failed him, or perhaps, his designs were altered and cut down to save expense."

After mentioning many instances of desecration of, and irreverence used towards fonts, some as cattle-troughs, some as sun-dials, garden-pots, &c., he proceeds thus:—

"Of the usage which fonts experience in churches, we may say a few words. Frequently they are painted in the most barbarous way. At Sandhurst, in Kent, the font is cut to make it stand close to the wall. The following is an inventory of the two fonts when lately visited. That at Pentlow, Essex, contained—

1. An old cotton umbrella.
2. A common hand-basin.
3. A smaller do.
4. A brown stone jug.
5. A dust-broom.

That at Sandiacre, Derbyshire—

1. A smock-frock.
2. A pair of leather gloves.
3. Some iron bolts.
4. A piece of lime.
5. Wooden wedges.

"All this is at once ludicrous and sad; it shews the utter ignorance which exists of the proper use of a font and of the respect and reverence due to it and to the sacrament to which it ministers. We may observe here, as elsewhere, how one neglect leads to another; had the administration of baptism been continued as a portion of our congregational worship, the font most surely would have escaped the desecrations and degradation which now await it, and would never have been removed from its own ancient position."

The reverend lecturer then proceeded to describe, by reference to numerous drawings of existing specimens, the peculiarities of each style in regard to fonts, and concluded his remarks on this subject as follows:—

"Of the glorious canopies by which so many fonts were covered, but few now remain. Luton, in Bedfordshire, has one which is *sui generis*; it is of stone, supported by eight pillars, is twenty-eight feet high, and forms a small oratory, capable of holding seven or eight people. The most frequent cover was of rich tabernacle-work in oak, sometimes enriched by gilding.

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"Castle Acre, in Norfolk, is a magnificent example, 16 feet in height; the canopy is raised by a pulley, and its counterpoise was sometimes a silver dove, so that as the font-cover ascended, the holy dove descended. Sometimes these covers were padlocked down and the key kept by the priest, as I believe is still the custom in Roman Catholic churches. From the font, when in its proper position at the west end of the church, the eye of the worshipper is almost instinctively drawn towards the altar at the east; at least, when the heart is impressed with a deep and proper sense of the object for which the church ought to be entered. This eastward direction seems in ancient churches to have been studiously encouraged and sought after; nothing was allowed to interrupt or break the view; the floor with its tiles laid in the form of a cross; the low open benches all looking the same way, and with a carved poppy-head at the end of each seat; the nave, pillars and arches; the clerestory windows, and finally the grained and open wooden roof, were so many separate but harmonizing channels, along which the eye was conducted towards the great east window and the altar.

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"Besides the pulpit, the nave, and the aisles of the present day seldom retain in their ground plan any thing of their ancient simplicity, being almost universally choked up with huge pews (or pues), and not unfrequently with stifled pews or galleries; the consequence of this is the utter destruction of that beauty and unity of design which ought to prevail. We may still, however, occasionally find objects to attract attention; sometimes we find a monumental brass half hidden beneath the flooring of a new deal box; sometimes, in large churches, at the east end of the aisles we find traces of the chantry altars which were placed there, in the piscinas and brackets which yet remain.

"Anciently, churches seemed to have had no fixed seats, other than a solid mass of masonry raised against the wall, and forming a long stone bench or seat. In Norman and early English buildings they are chiefly found; seats for the congregation are noticed in the Synod of Exeter, held A.D. 1287. Open wooden benches, which from the form, height, and ornaments they admit, harmonize so well with a Gothic interior, do not seem to have come into general use before the 15th century:

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